

We need to recognize that enabling prisoners to reintegrate into our communities as lawful and productive citizens is good for everybody. We should support proven efforts that get former prisoners to beat addictions and stay at work. And we should support the efforts of community leaders, especially religious leaders, to keep a stern eye on former offenders, while also lending them a helping hand. This is something that is beginning to work in Winston-Salem thanks to the Center for Community Safety at Winston-Salem State University. It is beginning to work in places like Maryland and Ohio. It is something that needs to work across America.

That is the challenge: First, develop real and automatic punishments for real violations of probation and parole. Second, enable probation and parole officers to get out of their offices and onto the streets. Third, make sure offenders who are ready to turn their lives around have the chance to do it.

Meeting that challenge will not be easy. Every State has different probation and parole systems. Some States have differences within their systems. While the truth is that a lot of these systems are not working, some of them are. Every reform I have described is already working someplace in America today. Our job in Washington will be to spread the things that work. I know there is legislation in conference right now that will help do that in a limited way.

I believe we should think bigger, on the model of the COPS Program, a program that not only helped police departments hire over 100,000 more cops, but that also helped change the way police departments do business. We need the same kind of effort when it comes to transforming probation and parole into an effective, accountable system for reducing crime.

It may be that this administration will oppose this effort. Their current budget has already proposed gutting the COPS Program. This administration seems to think that permanent tax cuts for the very wealthiest Americans are more important than cutting crime in the very poorest communities. I see it differently.

ESTATE TAX

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. President, I also wish to say a few words about the estate tax debate we are having right now.

With all due respect for my colleagues, I think this debate shows that a lot of people in Washington are totally out of touch with regular people back at home. I think we should step back and take stock of where we are right now.

No. 1, as all of us know, we are in the middle of fighting a war against terrorism, and we do not know when that war will end. Our young men and women are in harm's way overseas as I speak.

Here at home, we have very serious homeland security needs that the administration is struggling to meet. It is no exaggeration to say that Americans' lives depend on the success of those efforts. That is No. 1.

No. 2: We have a whole raft of serious needs in our country. I have been talking about the rising crime rate, but that is just the beginning. We have seniors who cannot pay for the medicine they need to live. We have parents who cannot afford to send their kids to college. We have children who go to school every day in crowded classrooms with leaky roofs, even as this administration cuts funding for education. That list goes on and on.

No. 3: We have a coming challenge in Social Security. We are going to have baby boomers retiring in huge numbers, and we are going to have to find a way to keep our social contract with them.

No. 1, we have a costly war against terrorism to fight abroad and at home. No. 2, we have deep problems with crime and education and health care that we are not addressing. No. 3, we have a coming crisis in Social Security.

And here is No. 4. Right now we cannot afford to address a lot of our serious needs—and in fact, our economy continues to sputter after a decade of extraordinary growth—because the country has gone from a multitrillion dollar surplus to a deficit in barely a year. That is very largely because of the tax cuts targeted to the wealthy this Congress already passed. It is a breathtaking fiscal turnaround.

With terrorism, with crime and education and health care needs, with a Social Security crisis, with massive fiscal hemorrhaging, what are we talking about here today?

We are not talking about reforming the estate tax to eliminate unfair burdens on farmers and small businesses, something I support. I very strongly believe that farmers and small businesses have to be protected from estate taxes.

We are talking about whether to blow another massive hole in the budget to pay for a tax cut that mostly benefits about 3,000 of the wealthiest families each year. In a country of over 275 million people, many of them struggling to pay their mortgages and send their kids to college, we are talking about multimillion dollar windfalls for about three thousand fortunate families.

I have only one question. Is this really why the American people send us here, to massively cut taxes on a very fortunate few while we are fighting terrorism and Social Security is in trouble and millions of middle class people are struggling? I do not think that is why people send us here.

What my colleagues are trying to do today on the estate tax is wrong from a national security perspective. It is wrong from a Social Security perspective. It is wrong from an economic per-

spective. And most important of all, it is wrong from a moral perspective.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. CORZINE. Mr. President, I commend the Senator from North Carolina for his remarks with regard to his views on probation and the deteriorating situation with regard to how we are moving and progressing with regard to crime. I am also glad to hear the Senator from North Carolina speak about estate tax in the context of Social Security. In fact, I will be speaking in a minute with regard to the Social Security issue.

It seems inconceivable to me that the roughly 3,000 people the Senator is talking about in our Nation, those who have benefited most from the power and the success of our Nation economically and done so well, should put at jeopardy the universal program that is such an important part of retirement security for so many Americans. It does not seem right in the context of the national security, but truly it seems misplaced when one thinks about Social Security for the breadth of Americans.

So I commend the Senator for his remarks, and particularly the tying together and juxtaposition of those efforts.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Mr. CORZINE. Mr. President, as many of my colleagues know, I have over the last few weeks been speaking regularly with regard to Social Security and proposals to privatize Social Security. I think this is one of the most important debates we as the Senate and Americans need to have. It needs to be done before elections, not afterwards, because I think we need to hear from the American people about what it is they want.

To many Americans, certainly to whom I talk, and many of my constituents in the State of New Jersey—and I certainly hear it from my colleagues, and I feel strongly—these proposals that are circulating with regard to private takings of Social Security are not the mindset of most Americans. That is particularly true when people become aware that they will involve deep cuts in guaranteed benefits and that, by implication, is going to force many Americans to work longer, delay their retirement, and develop a level of insecurity in a program that was really designed to promote security among senior citizens in our Nation.

The fact is that we have seen developing an undermining of retirement security for a whole host of reasons, whether it is the diminishment of the number of Americans who are covered by defined benefit programs or the insecurity of 401(k)s which we have seen in light of some of the elements that have come out of Enron. It is very hard for me and for most of the people with